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Report of the fifty-ninth meeting of the Standing Committee (4-6 March 2014)

Report of the Secretariat

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I. Introduction

1. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee, His Excellency Ambassador Choi Seokyoung (Republic of Korea), opened the meeting. The Vice Chairpersons, His Excellency Ambassador Pedro Comissário (Mozambique) and His Excellency Ambassador Carsten Staur (Denmark), assisted in chairing parts of the meeting on the first and second days.

2. The Chairperson welcomed Afghanistan, Angola, Armenia, Belarus, Panama, Peru and Senegal as new observers.

II. Adoption of the agenda of the 59th meeting and of the 2014 work programme

3. The agenda for the meeting (EC/65/SC/CRP.1) was adopted without comment.

4. The Committee adopted the 2014 work programme (EC/65/SC/CRP.2) as presented.

III. Regional activities and global programmes

5. In her introduction to the session on regional activities, the Assistant High Commissioner (Operations) briefed the Committee on the challenges that characterized UNHCR's operations over the past year, noting that the number of countries with major emergency operations continued to grow while ongoing emergencies increased in complexity and scale. She described the work being undertaken to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of UNHCR's emergency response to these unprecedented and growing demands. Every region and every part of the organization had been obliged to share the burden and contribute staff to support the emergency operations. The Assistant High Commissioner spoke about the increasingly dangerous settings in which UNHCR worked, recognizing the courage of colleagues – particularly national staff – and partners, who daily put themselves in harm's way to help those in need. The Office continued to be driven by the philosophy of "stay and deliver," but this required resources to mitigate risks, with an effect upon the cost of delivery.

6. While responding to emergencies, UNHCR was also reinforcing efforts to facilitate durable solutions in protracted refugee situations. The Assistant High Commissioner informed the Committee that a Solutions Steering Group had been created to reinvigorate the Office's approach to solutions and provide support to the field for promising initiatives. Though some 15 million dollars had been reallocated to support such projects, additional funds were needed. The Assistant High Commissioner also spoke about UNHCR's refugee coordination model which, while respecting the Office's accountability for refugees, allowed greater flexibility to avoid duplication with the cluster approach in situations involving both refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Finally, she underlined the importance of partnerships and highlighted a number of new initiatives, particularly with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP), aimed at maximizing the comparative advantages of the organizations involved.

A. Africa

7. The Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa presented the update, drawing attention to the explosion of new emergencies and the aggravation of existing ones which had obliged the Office to issue a succession of supplementary appeals. He highlighted that

the bulk of UNHCR's funding for Africa was allocated to immediate life-saving activities at the expense of investing in solutions, and that this was unsustainable.

8. Many delegations expressed serious concern about the crises in the Central African Republic and South Sudan. UNHCR was commended for its work in leading the protection cluster in the Central African Republic and enhancing protection for populations at risk and countering religious intolerance through reconciliation efforts. The effective leadership and proactive work of UNHCR in South Sudan were critical to ensuring protection and assistance. The Office was urged to advocate strongly for humanitarian access in South Sudan. Numerous delegations expressed concern about the growing militarization of refugee sites on the continent. It was urgent to ensure the disarmament of armed elements and the identification, separation and internment of combatants to ensure security in the camps and surrounding areas. In relation to integrated missions, the importance of ensuring neutrality and independence of humanitarian action was stressed. Member States underscored the need to have dedicated staff and sufficient resources to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.

9. The Committee welcomed the efforts to bring solutions to protracted situations, in particular the Global Initiative on Somali Refugees. The signing of the tripartite agreement for the voluntary return of Somali refugees from Kenya was an important step, although delegations stressed that returns must be voluntary and carried out with appropriate consideration given to each person's particular circumstances and security conditions in areas of return. Durable solutions inside Somalia required investments that went beyond the humanitarian community. The need for greater security for Somali refugees in Kenya was highlighted, as well as the importance of addressing food insecurity, possibly through the use of cash or voucher programmes. The importance of ensuring effective coordination both inside Somalia and in the camps was highlighted.

10. There was concern about the gap in funding humanitarian programmes for refugees and IDPs in Africa, particularly for activities related to self-reliance and livelihoods in an effort to bring about solutions. While it was difficult to find funds for these programmes, doing so was important as putting closure to protracted situations would allow funds to be redirected to emergencies. Return and reintegration assistance for refugees going home, such as those returning to Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was vital for the realization of durable solutions. Collaboration with development actors was also indispensable from a human security perspective. The Committee appreciated UNHCR's efforts to make resettlement a priority, though one delegation urged the Office to ensure that it was preserved for those genuinely in need of this durable solution.

11. In response, the Director conveyed his gratitude for the support of the Committee and for the many tributes to colleagues working on the ground. He thanked host, resettlement and donor countries, as well as those governments that were providing troops to support peacekeeping operations and stabilization efforts in places like the Central African Republic. On funding, he assured Member States that UNHCR was making every effort to secure resources for the operations in Africa. At the same time, he said it was important that the Office continue to work towards achieving greater efficiency in the use of its resources. For example, structural investments related to the construction of refugee camps required a large portion of the resources available, and this could be better spent on assisting populations and host communities. He assured the Committee that while emergencies commanded more resources, UNHCR would continue to advocate for funding to invest in opportunities for durable solutions.

B. The Americas

12. The Director of the Regional Bureau for the Americas emphasized five themes for the region: (i) opening and maintaining asylum space; (ii) mainstreaming an age, gender

and diversity approach into planning and implementation; (iii) addressing displacement due to transnational organized crime and other forms of criminal violence; (iv) preventing and reducing statelessness; and (v) providing protection and solutions in the Colombia situation. The Director also called on delegations to seize the opportunities offered by the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees with the "Cartagena +30 process." The year-long consultative process will culminate with the adoption of a declaration and new plan of action to guide the protection and solution agenda for the Americas for the next decade.

13. UNHCR's regional update was followed by the intervention of the Colombian Minister for Foreign Affairs, whose statement focused on Colombia's political, institutional, legislative and financial efforts to support and strengthen solutions for IDPs and Colombian refugees. She renewed her Government's commitment to collaborate with UNHCR in these endeavours, and expressed Colombia's support of the Cartagena +30 process. The Committee Members expressed appreciation to the Minister for her statement and many voiced support for the peace process in Colombia.

14. Many delegations welcomed the Cartagena +30 process as a timely initiative to bring new momentum to the protection framework in the region and stressed its importance as a State-led process to further the protection of IDPs or refugees fleeing conflict and violence. The majority of delegations that took the floor addressed the critical importance of solutions, including through the exploration of existing human mobility schemes for migration. Many States pointed to the forthcoming implementation of the Comprehensive Solutions Initiative for refugees in Ecuador and Costa Rica and the Transitional Solutions Initiative for IDPs in Colombia as positive examples of progress towards solutions. Delegates expressed confidence in the region's progress toward the establishment of fair asylum systems and the eradication of statelessness.

15. Meanwhile, concerns on irregular and mixed migration, asylum systems, unaccompanied minors, human trafficking and smuggling in the region were reflected in many statements. Some delegations expressed concern about displacement caused by transnational organized crime and other forms of violence in Central America. Receiving countries remarked that the number of asylum applications based on non-conflict related violence seem to be growing. A number of delegations insisted on the importance of the Quality Assurance Initiative to strengthen national asylum systems. Low recognition rates, tight timelines for application and admissibility requirements were nevertheless raised as concerns by some States.

16. In reply, the Director of the Americas Bureau welcomed the genuine interest expressed by delegations in the Cartagena +30 process and reiterated UNHCR's readiness to accompany the process, together with civil society. She echoed calls for concrete measures to be linked to the new plan of action that will emerge from the process. She reiterated the importance of the Quality Assurance Initiative as a tool to improve the low rates of acceptance and agreed that issues such as gender-based persecution and unaccompanied minors continue to be important areas of concern. Finally, she thanked the Committee for its support as well as its encouragement to share best practices from the region.

C. Asia and the Pacific

17. The Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific began her presentation with two major protracted situations in region: Afghanistan and Myanmar. She urged the international community to remain committed to the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries. She emphasized the importance of supporting host countries and thanked them for their generosity and progressive policies. The Director underlined the complex

nature of the challenges in the Asia-Pacific region, including the irregular movements of persons and the tragic maritime incidents that often follow. She emphasized the importance of comprehensive multilateral approaches, such as the Bali and Almaty Processes, and the importance of exploring partnerships to work effectively in the urban context. She also commented on the progress in addressing statelessness in the region. Finally, she provided a brief update on her recent mission to Myanmar and Thailand with the Assistant High Commissioner.

18. Many delegations expressed support for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees and acknowledged the generosity of the host countries. The need to redouble efforts towards solutions was reiterated, as well as building absorption capacity within Afghanistan for returnees by bridging the gap between humanitarian and development assistance. Many countries conveyed their commitment to continue supporting solutions through the provision of resettlement places.

19. Delegations agreed that irregular movements, including maritime arrivals, are a major challenge in the region and expressed support for this being one of UNHCR's regional priorities. Several delegations encouraged progress on a regional response through multilateral cooperation. One delegation mentioned that its resettlement programme would be expanded to include refugees from Myanmar in Malaysia. Several delegations expressed their appreciation for UNHCR's work in the Philippines in response to Typhoon Haiyan. Referring to the Transformative Agenda, one delegation sought UNHCR's feedback on the coordination of humanitarian assistance based on its experience there.

20. The Director responded that Typhoon Haiyan was the first Level 3 emergency in Asia, and that the humanitarian response was a good learning experience, as UNHCR was able to deliver on protection in an inter-agency context by working closely with a strong government lead. Though much remains to be done, the Director expressed appreciation for efforts to address irregular movements in the region. Responding to concerns about addressing the root causes of displacement in the region, the Director assured the Committee that UNHCR is working with all stakeholders. Similarly, partnership is imperative to enable progress on the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees, especially in creating adequate conditions for return and engaging development actors. Given the changes ahead in Afghanistan, this will require a focus on both solutions and contingency planning. In closing, she thanked donors for their political and financial support to operations in Asia and reiterated the importance of multilateral cooperation and burden-sharing.

D. Europe

21. The Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe described UNHCR's efforts to strengthen asylum, including within the framework of a Common European Asylum System. He addressed the issues of mixed migration by sea, unaccompanied and separated children, detention, integration, statelessness, the impact of the situation inside the Syrian Arab Republic upon European States, and solutions for protracted situations in the Western Balkans. With people increasingly taking to the sea in search of protection, he emphasized the legal obligation of European States to work collaboratively to reduce the loss of life, and the need for landlocked countries to support coastal countries in this regard. He spoke of the Central Mediterranean Sea Initiative and the need to create credible alternatives to secondary movements by sea in collaboration with States in North Africa and the Horn of Africa.

22. In response to recent tragedies by sea, delegations encouraged UNHCR to support the strengthening of protection systems in North Africa. Concerns were raised about human trafficking and smuggling, and delegations emphasized the importance of countries in North Africa, the Horn of Africa, Europe and beyond, addressing these issues in collaboration. While progress was noted toward a common asylum system in Europe, a

significant increase in asylum applications and low recognition rates in some countries demonstrated the need for further progress. Many European delegations reiterated their support for countries hosting Syrian refugees and their commitment to burden-sharing through resettlement and other forms of humanitarian admission.

23. UNHCR's follow-up to the Sarajevo Process and its Regional Housing Programme was welcomed, and the Office was encouraged to continue supporting its partners in the identification of vulnerable individuals in need of housing support. Responding to a forthcoming recommendation to invoke the cessation clause of the 1951 Refugee Convention for those displaced during the 1991-1995 conflicts, some delegations voiced support while others expressed concern that cessation was premature and would be counter-productive, particularly in the absence of adequate conditions for sustainable return and reintegration.

24. In response to questions about the need for consultation prior to issuance of a cessation recommendation, the Director clarified that UNHCR has a responsibility to guide Member States on the interpretation of the 1951 Convention. In this regard, UNHCR may recommend cessation, but the decision rests with the States. The Director reiterated that UNHCR will not relinquish its responsibilities to refugees and will ensure that solutions are found. The Director noted the concerns about the ramifications of the recommendation, including the potential impact on the Regional Housing Programme and donor support, and reassured the Committee that UNHCR is committed to the programme and to safeguarding donor support. He thanked those donors who had pledged ongoing support in their statements and encouraged all donors to pledge at the upcoming conference in Zagreb.

E. The Middle East and North Africa

25. The Vice-Chairperson began the session by briefing the Committee on follow-up to the High-Level Segment on Solidarity and Burden-Sharing with Countries Hosting Syrian Refugees, which had been held during the 65th session of the Executive Committee. This included an informal consultative meeting in February 2014 with presentations by representatives of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, as well as the Director of the Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa and the Deputy Director of the Division of International Protection.

26. The Director highlighted the complex humanitarian challenges confronting UNHCR, host countries and partners across the region. Most prominently, the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic had, to date, resulted in nearly 2.5 million registered refugees seeking safety in neighbouring countries and an estimated 9 million people inside the country needing protection and assistance. In the context of severe violence and loss of life, the generosity of host countries and communities had been exceptional. Although UNHCR had established a field presence in six locations and initiated airlifts to some eastern areas, humanitarian access inside the Syrian Arab Republic remained severely restricted. Meanwhile, with 80 per cent of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries living outside of camps, the mounting pressure on local infrastructure and public services and the cumulative economic and social impact of the crisis required increased and sustained burden-sharing by the international community.

27. Elsewhere in the region, access to asylum and basic rights and services had become increasingly difficult for refugees and asylum seekers in Israel. Renewed violence in Anbar Province, Iraq, had forced an additional 300,000 into internal displacement. Yemen's 300,000 internally displaced persons had become increasingly vulnerable to insecurity and a worsening economic situation, while refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa arrived daily, adding to the 250,000 refugees and asylum-seekers already in the country. Smuggling, trafficking and irregular movement continue to be a problem for countries of

transit in North Africa, with migrants and asylum-seekers undertaking risky and sometimes fatal voyages across the Mediterranean.

28. Twenty-six delegations took the floor. Delegations of host countries expressed appreciation to the High Commissioner and the Executive Committee for keeping the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic and its impact in neighbouring countries high on the agenda. They also expressed appreciation to both traditional and new resettlement countries for increasing spaces for resettlement and humanitarian admission. Several delegations reiterated the Assistant High Commissioner's appeal that "[f]or the countries most impacted by the Syria crisis…partnership with development actors is not only necessary, but also urgent and immediate, even as emergency needs are unfolding." One host country expressed its interest in receiving technical support to help with registration, as well as support for the education of Syrian children outside camps, who could not be integrated into the national education system.

29. Many delegations commended the tremendous generosity of the neighbouring host countries; many also updated on their efforts toward solidarity and burden-sharing, including through bilateral assistance, support to UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations, and enhanced opportunities for resettlement and other forms of humanitarian admissions. A number expressed deep concern about the deteriorating situation and the lack of humanitarian access inside the Syrian Arab Republic. In this regard, delegations welcomed UN Security Council Resolution 2139 and urged its prompt and full implementation.

30. Several delegations requested further information on the situation inside Yemen. UNHCR's efforts on behalf of Iraqi refugees and IDPs were commended, and the importance of its coordination role was stressed. Several delegations encouraged UNHCR to continue working with governments to prevent *refoulement* and arbitrary detention of asylum-seekers.

31. One delegation welcomed the continuation of protection and assistance programmes for Sahrawi refugees in the camps near Tindouf in Algeria and appealed for humanitarian assistance commensurate with the needs of these refugees and welcomed the recent donors' mission to the camps. This delegation stated that a registration of the populations in the camps must be seen in the context of the United Nations' peace plan. Another delegation emphasized the international responsibility of the host country on the human rights situation in Tindouf camps and called upon UNHCR to proceed with a census and registration of the retained populations, to enhance their protection and assistance based on sound figures and real needs, pending a political solution to this regional dispute.

32. Responding to questions, the Director noted the important role of registration in identifying specific vulnerabilities and needs of refugees. Through comprehensive data collection and the use of biometric technology, registration is the basis of well-targeted and cost-effective programmes. He highlighted the value of protection-sensitive approaches including cash-based support to vulnerable groups, targeted support to host communities, and direct support to governments for affected areas. He also noted the broad participation in the Regional Response Plan, with more than 150 partners, and UNHCR's recent efforts to reinforce both capacity for coordination and accountability to beneficiaries, including through enhanced communication with refugees and host communities. The Director stressed UNHCR's collaboration with the Government of Yemen to implement its National IDP Policy. Work on mixed migration with governments and other partners throughout the region included technical support, capacity-building and advocacy to prevent detention of persons of concern as a response to irregular migration.

F. Global programmes and partnerships

33. The Director of the Division for Programme Support and Management noted that UNHCR's global programmes covered a wide spectrum of activities, which aimed to improve the quality of life for refugees and other persons of concern. He stressed that effective partnerships were key to UNHCR's success in each of these programme areas. The Director highlighted the launching of global strategies in the areas of public health, settlement and shelter, livelihoods, and safe access to fuel and energy. He also spoke about the increased use of cash-based interventions, UNHCR's updated refugee registration software, and developments in the area of information and data management, including expanded coverage of UNHCR's operational web portals.

34. The Committee voiced its support for the new global strategies and, in particular, the emphasis on protection and solutions. At the same time, follow up with the field, including training, was essential to ensure that they did not remain only on paper. There was also a need for sustained attention to monitoring and reporting on implementation. One delegation queried how the new strategies would strengthen return and reintegration and how they could bridge the gap between humanitarian and development assistance, ensuring sustainability. Several Member States raised the issue of funding and how the new strategies would be harmonized with UNHCR's annual budget at a time of competing priorities.

35. Regarding the use of cash-based assistance, the Committee underscored that, while it could be effective in some cases, in particular for urban populations and IDPs, there could be difficulties in terms of monitoring and ensuring its effectiveness. Concern was also expressed that cash could become a pull factor, discouraging return. UNHCR was urged to ensure coordination with partners as well as careful oversight and management of cash and voucher programmes. More information was requested on the benefits and drawbacks of such an approach. There was substantial interest in the work of the Solutions Steering Group, and UNHCR was encouraged to ensure that, while the primary focus was on protracted situations, it also address emergencies in order to prevent them from becoming protracted in the future. There was a request for UNHCR to provide a briefing to interested Member States on the new refugee registration software and biometrics system.

36. With respect to the new global strategies, the Director reassured the Committee of UNHCR's focus on implementation and sustained engagement with the field. He clarified that they were developed as a more effective and efficient way to manage these activities, rather than to seek additional resources. The Director recognized the challenges involved in the use of cash-based assistance. He stressed the importance of feasibility studies in order to have a comprehensive understanding of implications for protection, impact on the market, and sustainability over time. The Director also explained that the use of cash was not new, but that advancements in technology had allowed the organization to use this form of assistance in a different way. He agreed it was important to look at any potential pull factor, but commented that this was also an issue with other forms of assistance.

IV. Management, financial control, administrative oversight and human resources

A. Staff safety and security

37. The Director of the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply recalled a series of recent security incidents affecting UNCHR staff and highlighted the importance of preparedness and immediate response to complex security situations. Through its security action plan for 2013- 2015, UNHCR is embedding a culture of security within the

organization and applying strategies that enable it to "stay and deliver," even in challenging environments.

38. Many delegations thanked UNHCR and humanitarian staff for their dedication and paid tribute to the staff members who have lost their lives while supporting displaced populations. Delegations recognized the complex security environment facing humanitarian staff, including the increased number of targeted attacks, with particular mention of the national staff who continue their service despite the direct impact of the crises on their lives. UNCHR was encouraged to continue working closely with the United Nations Division of Safety and Security and in partnership with other organizations. Deployments of field security staff, security training, the concept of "programme criticality," and working in partnership were welcomed approaches. Member States underscored that the security of staff is as important as the security of persons of concern.

39. The Director thanked the delegations for their support. She reiterated the importance of learning from the recent Level 3 emergencies and ensuring that security is integrated into all contingency planning and preparedness. She reassured the Committee that protecting national staff is a major concern. In regard to programme criticality, UNHCR is working on a standardized online tool to help prioritise and weigh risks.

B. Update on innovation

40. The Lead on Innovation briefed the Committee on the work of UNHCR Innovation since its inception in 2012. His presentation covered work in the following areas: (i) the 25 innovation projects currently under way; (ii) iFellow, an innovation leadership programme for UNHCR staff; (iii) UNHCRIdeas.org, the online platform for information-sharing; (iv) iCircle, the multi-stakeholder working group; (v) iFund, the dedicated investment fund for innovation projects; and (vi) Innovation Labs for project coordination.

41. Delegations taking the floor expressed support for the initiative and its creative approaches to enhancing self-reliance. Delegations were encouraged by the broad range of supporters engaged in the initiative, including other United Nations organizations and non-traditional partners from the private sector and academia. UNHCR was asked how UNHCR Innovation fits into the organization's structure.

42. In response, the Lead on Innovation reiterated that the work and resources of the Innovation team are at the disposal of the whole organization. By way of example, he explained that the Labs structurally and financially require cross-team collaboration. Similarly, the online platform, UNHCRideas.org, is designed to breakdown silos and hierarchy by sourcing ideas from all levels of staff across operations. The development of the joint guiding principles on UN humanitarian innovation is anticipated to support the long-term impact of the initiative.

C. Follow-up to the recommendations of the Board of Auditors on the financial statements for previous years

43. The Controller and Director of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management (DFAM) reported on UNHCR's follow-up to the recommendations of the Board of Auditors on the financial statements for 2012 and previous years, as contained in EC/65/SC/CRP.5. She provided a summary of the status of all open recommendations and highlighted the improvements made in addressing the key issues and recommendations made by the Board in its report on the 2012 financial statements.

44. The Committee commented positively on the concrete steps the Office was taking to address the recommendations and the fact that addressing them was considered a management priority. Acknowledging that many of the recommendations required structural changes which would take time to implement, delegations encouraged UNHCR

to use all available resources to implement them in a timely manner. The Committee welcomed the successful transition to IPSAS-compliant[1] financial statements for 2012. This was considered a major achievement. UNHCR was encouraged to implement outstanding recommendations in the area of inventory management.

45. A number of delegations expressed appreciation for the briefing on UNHCR's enhanced framework for implementing with partners, which took place in the margins of the meeting. This had provided Member States with a better understanding of how UNHCR was working on the Board's recommendation in this area. There was a request for a similar briefing on UNHCR's follow-up on the recommendations related to risk management. Interest was also expressed in the possibility of reviewing and streamlining a number of recommendations that are inter-related or that have been reiterated year-to-year.

46. In response to comments made about availability of matrices tracking progress in implementing recommendations of prior years, the Controller noted that these documents were not specifically prepared for Member States but rather for the Board. UNHCR provided them to the Committee for information. The matrices were very detailed and complex but demonstrated what action UNHCR was taking. She also highlighted that UNHCR's formal report to the Executive Committee in October, which was also submitted to the United Nations Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), provided a detailed summary of progress made. The Deputy High Commissioner updated the Committee on progress with respect to risk management. He indicated that a new policy on enterprise risk management, roll-out strategy and corporate risk register were being developed for implementation by the end of the year.

D. Oral update on the work of the Inspector General's Office (IGO)

47. The Inspector General's remarks focused on the in-housing of the internal audit function, which is on hold pending solutions to some legal questions, and the IGO's critical human and financial resource situation.

48. Delegations expressed their support for the in-housing of the internal audit function and requested that a separate briefing be arranged on this subject. Delegates also expressed satisfaction with UNHCR's increased acceptance rate of Joint Inspection Unit recommendations, as well as with the IGO's initiative to enhance collaboration with oversight entities in other United Nations organizations. Delegations shared concerns about the adequacy of financial and human resources provided to the IGO. UNHCR was encouraged to ensure that the IGO is appropriately resourced, and it was suggested that additional specialists should be recruited. Finally, concerns were expressed over a backlog of cases in the Investigation Service.

49. In response, the Inspector General welcomed the suggestion for an informal information-sharing meeting with Executive Committee Members on the in-housing of the internal audit function in the context of an integrated oversight service. He pledged to share the recommendations of the peer review of the Investigation Service by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), once these are available. He clarified that the backlog of investigation cases had been reduced considerably, despite an increase in the number of cases opened. However, in order to achieve this, the Investigation Service has had to rely heavily on consultants and staff-in-between-assignments.

50. The Deputy High Commissioner supported the Inspector General's work with regard to in-housing the internal audit function.

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[1] Refers to the International Public Sector Accounting Standards.

V. Programme budgets and funding

51. The Controller and Director of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management (DFAM) and the Director of the Division of External Relations (DER) jointly presented the update on programme budget and funding for 2013 and 2014 (EC/65/SC/CRP.6/Rev.1). The Controller provided an update on the financial situation in 2013. She also gave a brief overview of the 2014 annual budget, which was approved by the Executive Committee in October 2013, including the four supplementary budgets that had since been created to respond to new emergencies. The Director of DER then commented on UNHCR's funding situation in 2013 and projections for 2014, showing comparative positions from earlier years in respect of income versus budget; examples of funding gaps in 2013 and their impact, as well as funding gaps and contributions per region; trends in the timing of voluntary contributions; a comparison of contributions toward supplementary appeals and annual budgets; earmarking trends; contributions by region; sources of funding, including from UN and pooled funding mechanisms; and trends in private-sector fundraising income and investment.

52. While supporting the global needs assessment (GNA) approach to budgeting, which provided a picture of the operational requirements across the globe, the Committee expressed concern over the widening funding gap. One delegation noted that the increase in the budget did not seem to correspond with the growth in figures of persons of concern. UNHCR was encouraged to develop the GNA as a rationalized and effective needs-based budgeting system. The Office was also requested to be as transparent as possible with both partners and donors as it undertakes its prioritization exercise and allocates resources to the field. It was important for donors to have a clearer understanding regarding UNHCR's use of unearmarked funds.

53. The Committee expressed support for the efforts to improve the quality of the budget presentation. Several delegations queried what action UNHCR was taking to ensure adequate oversight and effective management of the increased resources it was receiving. In terms of fundraising, the Office was congratulated on its record high mobilization efforts. It was encouraged to continue to expand its donor base and engage with non-traditional donors. The importance of UNHCR receiving predictable funding was also highlighted by a number of delegations.

54. In terms of the improvements in the budget presentation, the Controller commented that this was thanks to the information provided by delegations in terms of what was lacking and what Member States wanted to see in the document. She remarked that this dialogue should continue so that UNHCR can continue improving the budget presentation and eliminate information that was no longer deemed relevant. The Controller explained the complexities of the prioritization process and the difficult decisions that management had to take in light of changing scenarios, new emergencies which required reprogramming, and the unpredictability of funding. She explained that earmarking was in itself a form of prioritization, hence constraining the High Commissioner's flexibility. Regarding oversight, the Controller stressed the commitment of the organization, starting with senior management, to strengthen internal control and related policies. She mentioned various initiatives that were underway, including the establishment of an internal control and accountability committee and the development of an internal control framework.

55. The Director of DER expressed appreciation for the continued support of the Committee, including the host countries. Regarding the relationship between funding increases and population increases, he noted that starting an emergency operation required a different level of funding than maintaining an operation. The Head of Private Sector Fundraising highlighted that increased support from the private sector was not only reflective of the considerable efforts and investments made over the past years, but also evidence of the enormous support for UNHCR's work globally, among the public and the

corporate world. Beyond funding, she stressed the benefits of building partnerships with corporate donors in terms of advocacy and finding operational solutions to challenges in the field. She informed the Committee that the Office was working on a new five-year strategy to enhance the level of funding from the private sector.

56. The decision on budgets and funding for 2013 and 2014 contained in annex I was adopted.

VI. Programme/protection policy

UNHCR's programme in the United Nations proposed strategic framework for the period 2016-2017

57. UNHCR's draft programme in the United Nations Proposed strategic framework for the period 2016-2017 (A/69/16 (Prog.21)) was reviewed. Delegations proposed two amendments to the draft programme: (1) that voluntary repatriation and local integration be reflected in the indicators; and (2) that the description of the objective of the organization be amended to reflect language from General Assembly Resolution 58/153. In relation to the second amendment, the text would read as follows:

> *To ensure international protection to refugees and, as applicable, other persons of concern to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and to achieve permanent solutions to their problems in cooperation with States and other organizations, including through the provision of humanitarian assistance.*

58. Another delegation noted that program approaches including gender mainstreaming, participatory assessments, and safety and security, were relevant for all populations of concern, not only refugees.

59. UNHCR took note of the proposed amendments and comments and reassured delegations that they would be conveyed to the Programme Planning and Budget Division of the United Nations Secretariat in New York. The amendments would be reflected in the consolidated conference room paper, containing changes requested by all relevant sectoral, functional and regional bodies, for presentation to the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its 2014 session in June/July.

60. The Standing Committee adopted the decision contained in annex II of the present document, taking note of the draft programme, on the understanding that the requested amendments would be transmitted to New York.

VII. International protection

A. Oral update on the High Commissioner's 2013 Dialogue on Protection Challenges

61. The Director of the Division of International Protection provided a summary of the outcome of the High Commissioner's 2013 Dialogue on Protection Challenges, which focused on the protection of IDPs. He reported that follow-up was proceeding along four work streams: (i) reviewing UNHCR's policy on its engagement with IDPs and developing operational guidelines in certain areas; (ii) strengthening UNHCR's engagement with IDPs, both institutionally and in its role as lead of the global protection cluster; (iii) supporting the development and implementation of legislation and policies on internal displacement; and (iv) strengthening partnerships with a range of stakeholders, especially development actors, to intensify the solutions potential of IDP interventions.

62. Delegations commended UNHCR for having chosen this theme for the Dialogue. The unprecedented level of participation demonstrated that the discussion was both timely and needed. A number of Member States expressed support for UNHCR's commitment to strengthen its engagement with this population and review its policy on IDPs, and asked to be kept informed of progress made. At the same time, UNHCR was reminded that its intervention in cases of internal displacement should be based on the principle of consent and request by the country concerned and should not come at the expense of the Office's activities for refugees. In terms of the organization of the annual Dialogue, one delegation reiterated its request that UNHCR limit the number of small group sessions, which would allow participants with small representations to follow the discussions fully.

63. In response, the Director agreed with States that had emphasized the need to adopt an action and solutions-oriented approach. It was precisely with this in mind that UNHCR was looking at developing better operational guidance, including from a solutions angle. The Director also took note of the suggestion to review the format of the Dialogue.

B. Introduction of the ExCom Conclusion theme

64. The Executive Committee Rapporteur updated the Committee on the progress made thus far in identifying a theme for the 2014 conclusion on international protection. Eight proposals had been received by the Committee. The Rapporteur commented that the record number of proposals was a clear demonstration of both the interest of the international community and the importance of the task.

65. Delegations commended the Rapporteur for his transparent and consultative facilitation of the process. Many delegations noted that they were encouraged by the number of proposals. Concerns were raised that negotiations on the selection of a theme and past negotiations on the text have been unnecessarily drawn out. Delegations also mentioned that host countries have a particular interest in the conclusions process as many of these conclusions impact them directly.

66. In response, the Rapporteur agreed that the priority must be on developing a conclusion that balances protection with sustainable solutions and focuses on matters that are operational and have a direct benefit for people of concern. He expressed his commitment to ongoing informal consultations with the Committee to move the process forward.

VIII. Any other business

67. Under any other business, the Chairperson proposed that the Committee adopt the reports of the Standing Committee meetings through an electronic circulation process. He explained that the report of the meeting is normally adopted by the Standing Committee at its next meeting. As the reports inform the work of the Executive Committee during its annual plenary session each October, they become official UN documents, requiring translation into all six UN languages. Keeping in mind the stricter document processing requirements of the United Nations documentation service, circulating the reports electronically would allow for faster processing and for the Secretariat to submit them to the United Nations in a timely manner. This has the added advantage for the Committee of reviewing and adopting the report within weeks, rather than months, of a meeting. Following circulation of the draft report and absent any amendments proposed, the report would then be considered adopted. There were no objections to the proposal.

Annex I

Decision on budgets and funding for 2013 and 2014

The Standing Committee,

Recalling the Executive Committee's decision at its sixty-fourth session on administrative, financial and programme matters (A/AC.96/1132) as well as its discussions under the programme budgets and funding item at the fifty-eighth meeting of the Standing Committee in September 2013,

Reaffirming the importance of international burden and responsibility-sharing in reducing the burden on countries hosting refugees, especially developing ones,

Recalls that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-third session, approved programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and Headquarters under UNHCR's revised 2012-2013 biennial programme budget amounting to $3,924.2 million for 2013;

Recalls that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-fourth session, approved programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and Headquarters under UNHCR's 2014-2015 biennial programme budget amounting to $5,307.8 million for 2014;

Notes that the 2013 supplementary budgets amounted to $1,413.7 million for programmes benefiting refugees and internally displaced persons;

Notes the reduction of $2.5 million for Mali;

Notes that the 2014 supplementary budgets currently amount to $394.3 million for programmes benefiting refugees and internally displaced persons;

Takes note of the increase in UNHCR's 2014 annual budget to a total of $5,702.1 million;

Recognizes that emergencies and unforeseen activities unfolding in 2014 may result in the need for additional or expanded supplementary budgets, and that additional resources, over and above those for existing budgets, would be needed to meet such needs; and

Urges Member States to continue to respond generously, in a spirit of solidarity and in a timely manner, to the High Commissioner's appeal for resources to meet in full the 2014 annual budget.

Annex II

Decision on UNHCR's programme in the United Nations proposed strategic framework for the period 2016-2017

The Standing Committee,

Takes note of the attached *Programme 21: International protection, durable solutions, and assistance to refugees* of the biennial programme plan of the United Nations proposed strategic framework for the period 2016-2017.

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Reports on the work of the Standing Committee

Note on international protection

Report of the High Commissioner

Summary

This note reviews major protection and solutions developments during the period June 2013-May 2014. It highlights protection responses in emergency and ongoing crisis situations, as well as the challenges presented by mixed migration and movements by sea. The note also reports on broader aspects of refugee and IDP protection, comprehensive solutions and statelessness. The information contained in this note is presented through an age, gender and diversity lens. Information on UNHCR's age, gender and diversity policy is contained in EC/65/SC/CRP.14; resettlement, children protection, and solutions are reported upon separately in EC/65/SC/CRP.11, EC/65/SC/CRP.13, and EC/65/SC/CRP.15 (available from http://www.unhcr.org/standingcommittee).

The note also provides an update on the implementation of pledges made by States at the intergovernmental event at the ministerial level of Member States of the United Nations on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, which was held in Geneva, Switzerland in December 2011.

Unless otherwise specified, all documents cited in this note may be accessed from UNHCR's legal database available at www.refworld.org.

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I. Introduction

1. Over the past year, instability and conflict persisted in many parts of the world, leading to several new emergencies while others continued unresolved. Against the backdrop of large-scale population displacement, and despite the generosity of host and donor States, humanitarian response and community reception capacities were stretched. In the mixed migration context, border closures, restricted access, arbitrary detention and other barriers and deterrents to admission and asylum were of serious concern. The growing number of abductions of asylum-seekers and refugees from countries of asylum was a troubling trend. Meanwhile, maritime incidents continued to take many lives, underscoring the need for new approaches to this particular challenge. Notable progress on statelessness was made, with greater resolve by States and other stakeholders to prevent and address the phenomenon. The response to situations of internal displacement was also strengthened, including through the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges in December 2013, which focused on this theme. Although renewed emphasis was given to solutions, the number of newly displaced persons outweighed, by far, those for whom a solution was possible. The failure to resolve long-standing conflicts meant that return and reintegration was an unrealistic option for many, while opportunities for local solutions expanded modestly owing to the goodwill of a number of host countries.

II. Protection in emergencies and ongoing crises

2. UNHCR was robustly engaged in numerous large-scale, complex emergencies involving both refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Adding to the pressures of existing crises, three new situations – the Central African Republic, the Philippines and South Sudan – were designated by the United Nations as level-3 emergencies. Providing protection in such situations involves three key elements. First and foremost, it requires that persons of concern are able to enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms, without discrimination. This principle guides all of UNHCR's interventions and operations on the ground. Second, concrete, quality protection services need to be delivered promptly, such as registration, documentation, measures to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and child protection, and this requires that UNHCR and its partners intervene when persons of concern are at risk. Third, it means that protection considerations are integrated into every service and assistance programme.

3. The war in the Syrian Arab Republic has now entered its fourth year. The exodus from the country grew by more than 1.7 million refugees in 2013, bringing the total number to over 2.7 million by mid-2014. Inside the country, there were an estimated 6.5 million IDPs, of which an estimated 3.5 million were residing in locations that were difficult or impossible to reach. During the first five months of 2014 alone, UNHCR and its partners delivered assistance to more than 1.5 million people in 13 out of 14 governorates, reaching more than 100,000 individuals a week. UNHCR participated in a number of inter-agency convoys to hard-to-reach areas and launched humanitarian airlifts of food and aid supplies from Erbil, Iraq. As the situation deteriorated in Homs, UNHCR participated in the evacuation of civilians from the Old City and prepared a set of minimum standards, grounded in principles of international human rights and humanitarian law, to guide future evacuations. These standards were subsequently endorsed by the United Nations Country Team in Damascus.

4. The host countries of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey generously provided protection and assistance to the Syrian refugees. In addition to the ongoing registration of newly arrived refugees, biometric iris-scanning is being rolled out in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon, which will strengthen the accuracy and completeness of the information recorded and enable UNHCR and its partners to better address the needs of the population. Approximately four out of five Syrian refugees reside outside of camps. To reach the most vulnerable among these populations in Jordan and Lebanon, UNHCR, together with the World Food Programme, is implementing cash assistance programmes. In Jordan, at least 92,000 home visits were carried out to assess socio-economic and other needs.

5. More than half of the Syrian refugee population are under 18 years of age. UNHCR and its partners continued to help the Syrian children overcome their situation, including by strengthening child protection and prioritizing education. Almost 400,000 Syrian refugee children have enrolled in formal education across the region. Despite the investments made, that represents less than 40 per cent of the children. SGBV prevention and response programmes were also strengthened through multisectoral approaches, community outreach and mechanisms for identification and referral.

6. The scale and depth of the Syria refugee crisis has placed extraordinary pressure on the host countries and support for them remains crucial. Economic and social assessments of the impact of the crisis on Jordan and Lebanon were undertaken by the World Bank and the United Nations, and the findings fed into the inter-agency Regional Response Plan for 2014. As national development plans in the region could not have anticipated the extent of pressure that would be placed on the local economies and infrastructure, the increased support to host communities in the Regional Response Plan was designed to complement the plans. Also, in order to relieve pressure on the host countries, 30,000 resettlement places have been allocated this year for the most vulnerable Syrian refugees. The aim is to resettle an additional 100,000 refugees by the end of 2016.

7. The situation in the Central African Republic was characterized by widespread conflict and violence, extrajudicial executions, SGBV, torture and other atrocities, prompting its designation as a level-3 emergency. The fighting displaced over half a million people internally, including 142,000 in the capital. Approximately 360,000 people fled to neighbouring countries, namely Cameroon, Chad, the Congo (Republic of), and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. UNHCR mounted emergency operations in these countries to strengthen the State responses to the influx. Meanwhile, it bolstered its presence in the Central African Republic to address, within the inter-agency framework, the many protection and humanitarian assistance needs.

8. The outbreak of new fighting in South Sudan in December 2013 displaced 111,000 people internally and close to half a million across borders into Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda. UNHCR welcomed the decision of most governments in the region to recognize on a prima facie basis the refugees fleeing South Sudan. Ongoing violence in parts of Sudan, particularly in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States, left 1.2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, with hundreds of thousands internally displaced and 250,000 refugees in Ethiopia and South Sudan. Across the region, the remoteness of refugee sites and the lack of basic infrastructure, including camps in flood-prone areas, were major impediments to the delivery of protection and assistance for refugees. Competition over water, food and other resources increased tensions among refugees as well as between refugees and host communities.

9. Despite a number of encouraging political developments in Somalia, a large portion of the population remains displaced with many people located in areas that are inaccessible due to a lack of security. Currently, there are some 1.1 million IDPs and nearly one million refugees in the region, including close to 30,000 who fled across borders in 2013. While some spontaneous returns have taken place to Somalia, the overall security situation has

delayed prospects for organized voluntary return. Instability prevailed in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with continued waves of displacement. In three northern states of Nigeria, the security situation remained precarious, leading to the prolongation of the Government's declared state of emergency and the displacement of thousands of people internally and across borders into Cameroon and Niger.

10. Yemen continued to face a complex situation characterized by ongoing civil unrest, a fragile security, political, economic and social situation, and extreme poverty. In addition to a large number of IDPs, Yemen is affected by a mixed flow of asylum-seekers and migrants, and currently hosts 239,000 refugees from the Horn of Africa. The situation in the country contributed to reduced access to food, basic services and livelihood opportunities for the refugee population.

11. Four million people were displaced in the Philippines following a devastating typhoon that struck the country in November 2013. UNHCR's pre-existing presence on the ground meant that it could quickly organize an emergency airlift to provide aid to the survivors and, as co-lead of the protection cluster, set up protection monitoring and response structures. Working closely with the authorities, particular attention was given to assisting vulnerable populations and those in remote areas. Housing, land and property issues remain key challenges to allowing the displaced to return home.

12. While a number of displacement situations became further protracted, others showed signs of stabilization. In Myanmar, positive political developments took place, opening up possible opportunities for return. Consultations were held with all stakeholders on voluntary repatriation for refugees in Thailand, while UNHCR continued to participate in the inter-agency response to assist 140,000 persons who remain displaced in Rakhine State. In Iraq, returns took place alongside further displacement, while stability in some areas was matched by rising insecurity in others. The deteriorating security situation in Anbar Governorate in early 2014, for example, displaced some 360,000 persons, bringing the total number of displaced to approximately 1.2 million

13. As a result of rising organized criminal violence and insecurity in Central America and Mexico, the number of asylum applications from these areas has sharply increased, particularly in the United States of America, and there has been a spike in the number of unaccompanied and separated children. UNHCR is conducting studies and profiling exercises in Central America, including through a new strategic partnership with the Central American Integration System, to better understand the magnitude and patterns of forced displacement and to raise awareness of these new displacement trends. In Honduras, the Government passed a decree establishing an inter-institutional Commission for the Protection of Persons Displaced by Violence, of which UNHCR is a member.

14. The situation in Colombia stabilized to some extent with renewed efforts to resolve five decades of conflict. Nevertheless, human rights violations perpetrated by demobilized armed groups and new actors continued to force people from their homes. There have been significant movements along the border with Ecuador, where up to 1,000 new arrivals were registered each month in 2013. This trend has continued in 2014.

15. To support operational responses, UNHCR released a preparedness package for refugee emergencies, which provides guidance to staff and partners on standards, risk analysis and contingency planning. Field staff were also equipped with guidance on maintaining the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum, as well as information on risk mitigation and accountability, particularly in light of the Secretary-General's human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces and the Rights Up Front initiative (http://www.un.org/sg/rightsupfront). The Principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) endorsed a statement on the Centrality of

Protection in Humanitarian Action' in December 2013, which was disseminated to all Humanitarian/Resident Coordinators.

16. Following two expert meetings in 2012 and 2013, UNHCR issued *Guidelines on Temporary Protection or Stay Arrangements*, which provide options to address complex or mixed population movements, particularly in situations where existing responses are not suited or adequate. While temporary protection or stay arrangements must not replace existing frameworks, such as the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, the Guidelines were developed in recognition that there are circumstances where alternative responses that are predictable and flexible may be beneficial, pending transition to other arrangements. Such arrangements are particularly suited to countries and regions with few States parties to the 1951 Convention. UNHCR also contributed to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women's (CEDAW) General Recommendation N° 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations.

III. Refugee protection

A. Protection in mixed flows

17. Migration is at the very juncture between UNHCR's international refugee protection and solutions work on the one hand, and the policies and practices of governments in managing their borders, on the other. While there are many legitimate measures taken by governments to prevent and respond to the phenomenon of irregular migration, their non-discriminatory application can mean that asylum-seekers and refugees are denied access to asylum and other fundamental rights. Together with partners, UNHCR has been working with governments to strike the right balance in their migration management policies and practices, and build fair and efficient asylum systems.

18. Securing access to territory and protection, especially in the context of mixed migratory movements, remained a global challenge. The principle of *non-refoulement*, the cornerstone of international protection and a norm of customary international law, was not always respected. In particular, physical and administrative barriers to accessing safe territory, such as border closures, the erroneous application of "safe third country" concepts, and the granting of extradition requests without due process safeguards were common. Secrecy surrounding the transfer or relocation of asylum-seekers to other countries, as well as an increase in the abduction and unlawful removal of refugees and asylum-seekers from asylum countries, were particularly worrying. UNHCR registered its concern about such cases and issued guidance for States on safeguards against unlawful removal.

19. The routine detention of asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons, alongside economic migrants and often in sub-standard conditions, posed another major threat to their security and rights. This prompted UNHCR to develop a five-year global strategy to end arbitrary detention practices, which will focus on some 10 countries in the initial two-year roll out. The strategy emphasizes ending the detention of children. UNHCR successfully intervened in a number of court cases on detention during the last year, and in the framework of the memorandum of understanding signed by UNHCR and the International Detention Coalition in June 2013, supported a series of regional workshops on detention

[1] Available from http://www.interaction.org/document/centrality-protection-humanitarian-action-statement-iasc.

and alternatives to detention. UNHCR's *Guidelines on the Applicable Criteria and Standards relating to the Detention of Asylum-Seekers and Alternatives to Detention* are now available in 10 languages.

20. At the operational level, given the complex movements in the Gulf of Aden, UNHCR strengthened its work in Yemen through, inter alia, identification and referral mechanisms, detention monitoring, and support to the Danish Refugee Council's teams patrolling the Gulf. In Asia, where mixed movements are common, UNHCR continued to provide support to the Regional Support Office of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (Bali Process). UNHCR also provided logistical and financial assistance to those wishing to voluntarily return home in the context of the regional programme on assisted voluntary return implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). In Central Asia, regional cooperation and good practices were discussed at the second Ministerial Conference on Refugee Protection and International Migration held in Kazakhstan in June 2013.

21. In Europe, UNHCR is concerned about the lack of effective access to protection at some parts of the European Union's external border due to serious barriers and reports of "pushbacks" without appropriate protection screening. In the western Balkans, an initiative was launched to help strengthen asylum systems in the region.

22. Combatting people trafficking, a crime which entails serious violations of human rights, was high on UNHCR's protection agenda during the year. Many persons of concern to UNHCR are at risk of such abuse and fall victim to traffickers, adding to the dangers they face in search of safety. In response to increasing incidents of smuggling and trafficking in the East and Horn of Africa, UNHCR developed a comprehensive regional strategy and action plan to address it at the country level. As part of the regional strategy, Egypt put in place a system whereby trafficked persons who claim asylum are now referred to UNHCR for fast track registration and provided with initial assistance. In Sudan, UNHCR worked to reduce the incidents of disappearances, smuggling and trafficking among refugees and asylum-seekers by providing training to the security forces, enhancing collaboration with partners and establishing a safe house in eastern Sudan, where the problem is prevalent. In Tunisia, a protection-sensitive border initiative was launched in 2013 to strengthen the capacity of border officials in migration management, including the identification of trafficked persons and their referral for appropriate redress. New anti-trafficking laws were introduced in Bolivia (the Plurinational State of) and Costa Rica. As part of the Bali Process, UNHCR began developing a training curriculum on the identification, assistance and protection of trafficked persons in the Asia-Pacific region. A pilot training was organized in the Republic of Korea in March 2014.

23. At the global level, UNHCR contributed to the second High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development of the United Nations General Assembly, which took place in October 2013, and provided support to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration. UNHCR also issued a *Guidance Note on Bilateral and/or Multilateral Transfer Arrangements of Asylum-seekers*, setting out the standards expected for such arrangements.

B. Protection at sea

24. An increasing number of asylum-seekers have lost their lives on dangerous sea journeys, at the hands of criminal smugglers. While the rescue-at-sea tradition remained strong among shipmasters, at times those rescued were refused disembarkation, pending difficult negotiations. In many regions, there is a lack of consensus among States on disembarkation and processing arrangements.

25. Following the tragedy off the coast of the Italian island of Lampedusa in early October 2013, in which more than 360 persons lost their lives, Italy launched the "Mare Nostrum" operation. This initiative aims to reinforce patrols and rescue capacity in the Mediterranean Sea. Since the start of the operation, 43,000 persons have been rescued. Many other incidents go undetected around the globe because of the vast sea routes as well as the absence of search-and-rescue regimes in some areas. Worrisome practices of "pushbacks", "towbacks" and other forms of maritime interdiction have taken place in the Asia-Pacific region, the Mediterranean and the Caribbean, testing the principle of *non-refoulement*.

26. The Praesidium project, which was launched in Italy to provide a protection-sensitive framework for inter-agency cooperation to meet the post-disembarkation, reception and processing needs of those rescued, offers a useful model that could be adopted in other locations. A further best-practice example is the recently adopted regulation on Frontex[2]-coordinated surveillance of external sea borders, which reinforces the principle of *non-refoulement*, fundamental rights at sea and regional burden-sharing. UNHCR also continued to promote the *Model Framework for Cooperation Following Rescue-at-Sea Operations*, adopted at the 2011 Djibouti expert meeting on refugees and asylum-seekers in distress at sea.

27. Momentum to advance protection at sea is building, with several regional conferences in 2013 and 2014. The Jakarta Declaration emerging from the Indonesia-hosted special conference on irregular movements of persons in August 2013, as well as the Sana'a Declaration adopted at a regional conference in Yemen in November 2013, both addressed protection at sea. A regional conference in the Bahamas also explored opportunities for regional approaches to identifying people with protection needs who move by sea. Protection at sea is a responsibility of coastal as well as non-coastal States. In Europe, UNHCR has proposed to States and European Union institutions a common response to sea arrivals through the Central Mediterranean Sea Initiative. UNHCR has also launched a global initiative on protection at sea. To be implemented together with partners, the initiative will not only address the immediate responses to such incidents but also the drivers of irregular movements by sea. The High Commissioner's 2014 Dialogue on Protection Challenges, which will focus on this theme, will underpin this initiative.

C. Fair and efficient State asylum systems

28. Assisting governments to build and improve asylum and protection systems is central to UNHCR's mandate and the protection of refugees. There have been a number of positive legislative developments at regional and national levels, including follow-up to the pledges made at the ministerial intergovernmental event in 2011.[3] At the same time, laws in some countries had the effect of restricting access to asylum. UNHCR assisted governments in developing national laws in at least 50 countries during the reporting period. In line with their pledges, Bolivia (the Plurinational State of) and Papua New Guinea adopted new immigration and asylum laws. In Europe, the Dublin III Regulation came into effect on 1 January 2014, and the remaining recasts of the Common European Asylum System were adopted in June 2013, with legislative amendment processes underway in many countries.

[2] The European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union.

[3] Information on the ministerial intergovernmental event is available from http://www.unhcr.org/ministerial.

29. Several significant reforms of national asylum systems and procedures also took place. UNHCR provided advice and training in support of the new unified screening mechanism in Hong Kong SAR, China. Technical advice was also provided to Japan and Morocco in relation to their asylum review processes. In Morocco, the Government renewed its migration and asylum policy, leading to the formal recognition of UNHCR-documented refugees and the provision of residence permits. UNHCR worked with the Government of Ireland on the introduction of a single procedure to manage claims for refugee status and subsidiary protection, as well as to resolve the backlog in the latter cases. In the Republic of Korea, refugee status determination (RSD) capacity was strengthened and the establishment of a reception facility in Incheon for newly arriving asylum-seekers was completed. In Djibouti and the United Republic of Tanzania national eligibility committees resumed their work in 2013.

30. In Europe, quality initiatives were undertaken in Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus, as well as in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and in the Americas, they were implemented in Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico and Panama. UNHCR also engaged with State authorities, legal and judicial actors, universities and civil society on training and capacity-building. At the request of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, UNHCR carried out an audit on the best interests of children in families seeking asylum in the country. In Uruguay, UNHCR organized a regional expert consultation on the refugee definition in the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees to bring greater clarity to its interpretation. Reports on the state of asylum systems in Bulgaria, Italy and Ukraine were released. Together with the University of Tripoli, a refugee law course was prepared for the Libyan authorities. UNHCR also continued to collaborate with the International Institute of Humanitarian Law, in San Remo, Italy in offering multiple international refugee law courses.

31 Weaknesses in some systems were also exposed during the reporting period. In 2013, Bulgaria was faced with a significant increase in asylum applications, especially from Syrians, and UNHCR launched an emergency response to assist the Government in improving reception conditions and processing applications more efficiently. These efforts were undertaken in close cooperation with the European Asylum Support Office, the European Commission and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In the Pacific, UNHCR remains concerned about transfer arrangements for external reception and processing and the absence of adequate protection standards and safeguards for asylum-seekers and refugees.

32. At the policy level, UNHCR issued new *Guidelines on International Protection: Claims to Refugee Status related to Military Service*, a research report on credibility assessment in the European Union, and a number of papers on eligibility and protection considerations. Several return advisories were also published. UNHCR intervened in a number of important court cases in the area of refugee protection. An external version of the *UNHCR Protection Manual* and a Russian version of *Refworld* were released.

D. Mandate refugee status determination

33. Despite progress made by many States in developing and strengthening national asylum systems, UNHCR remained responsible for carrying out registration and RSD in a significant number of countries. Over the past years, in response to an increasing number of new emergencies, UNHCR has had to expand many of its existing mandate RSD operations and establish new ones as part of its protection response. As a result of the Syria conflict, UNHCR quickly adapted its mandate RSD operations in the region in order to process large numbers of arrivals, and implemented simplified procedures for resettlement

and humanitarian admission. UNHCR also carried out, on an ad hoc basis, RSD for maritime arrivals and asylum-seekers in detention.

34. UNHCR continued efforts to enhance the efficiency of mandate RSD procedures, by identifying and implementing alternative case processing approaches or alternatives to RSD for select nationalities or groups. It also further strengthened its RSD staffing capacity. In 2013, the number of staff engaged in mandate RSD increased by 11 per cent, from 400 to 440, representing the highest total number and the largest annual increase. Despite this increase in capacity, the number of individual RSD applications registered exceeds the number of individual RSD decisions issued. As a result, the number of pending cases rose to 252,900, mainly due to increases in the operations in Malaysia and Turkey. UNHCR deployed a number of experts to assist States with RSD, and published the preliminary findings from a lessons-learned study on UNHCR's experience with such efforts. Recognizing that the scale of UNHCR's mandate RSD activities is not sustainable, the Office renews its call on States to assume greater responsibility for this endeavour.

E. Security, dignity and enjoyment of rights

35. Life in exile is often characterized by family separation, loss of livelihoods and income, and dependency on aid. Applying UNHCR's age, gender and diversity (AGD) policy, the participation and empowerment of all those affected, including host communities, ensure appropriate protection responses and can contribute to a more stable and secure stay.

36. UNHCR took several steps to maximize the impact of its strategies in the three key areas of child protection, education, and SGBV protection and response, including setting up a monitoring system to track results arising from their implementation. With the support of the Government of the United States of America, UNHCR developed the "safe from the start" initiative to bolster its protection response in these three areas from the outset of an emergency. This initiative promotes specific actions, including the deployment of dedicated staff, innovative programming in field operations and the building of staff capacity through learning initiatives. In eight operations, UNHCR developed planning and monitoring tools to strengthen implementation of the strategies. UNHCR worked with the Columbia Group for Children in Adversity on a pilot study in Rwanda and developed a child protection index to detect trends and impact by comparing survey results over time. Youth engagement has also been supported in many operations, including in Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran and South Sudan.

37. UNHCR intensified its efforts to provide legal assistance and counselling on SGBV in Burundi, Djibouti and Uganda. In Kenya, the mobile court system led to the prosecution of 66 sexual offenders. A similar mobile court project has been launched on a pilot basis in Uganda. In Ecuador, UNHCR is assisting with the development of response capacities to help survivors of SGBV. In Costa Rica, a screening tool to enhance UNHCR's effectiveness in identifying persons at risk and SGBV survivors was developed. Initiatives such as the establishment of safe shelters for women and capacity building projects for community workers were supported in many operations around the world. UNHCR also released an advocacy film to inform asylum decisions in cases of female genital mutilation. In Europe, having achieved the necessary 10 ratifications, the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) will enter into force on 1 August 2014.

38. UNHCR continued to advance implementation of its AGD policy. A series of webinars on different AGD-related protection issues were held. In response to an increase in reports of serious discrimination and violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) individuals in Haiti, UNHCR and its partners organized a roundtable

to discuss protection responses for sexual minorities. In Central America, UNHCR is supporting a pilot project aimed at developing a network of shelters in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua. Racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance continued to threaten asylum-seekers and refugees. To sensitize primary and secondary students and teachers in Greece, a project was implemented to promote tolerance and prevent racism. In South Africa, IOM, in partnership with UNHCR, launched a campaign to raise awareness about the positive contributions of migrants and refugees to society.

39. In 2014, UNHCR issued new global strategies on 1) settlement and shelter, 2) livelihoods, 3) safe access to fuel and energy, and 4) public health, which all have protection principles at their core. The livelihoods strategy, which emphasizes the right to work, aims to move refugees out of extreme poverty and provide opportunities for them to make a safe and sustainable living.

40. Registration and population data management are critical to understanding the protection and assistance needs of persons of concern. Robust systems are important for identity management, including the protection of identity, the reduction of fraud and the prevention of identity theft. In Pakistan, protection space for registered Afghan refugees was secured by the extension until December 2015 of the proof of registration cards issued by the Government. UNHCR continued to invest in biometric systems in a number of operations. In 2013, biometric registration was rolled out in Burkina Faso and Mauritania to support the Mali refugee operation.

IV. Protection of internally displaced persons

41. In many places around the world, internal displacement has become chronic. At the end of 2013, the global number of persons displaced internally reached an estimated 33.3 million, the highest number ever recorded. Escalating conflict and violence, and massive human rights abuses, ranging from forced recruitment to torture and rape, forced millions into displacement in 2013 alone. The absence of governance and the rule of law provided fertile ground for war crimes carried out with impunity. Despite considerable progress over the last decade in developing tools, policies and legislation to enhance protection for IDPs, numerous gaps persist. To address these gaps, the High Commissioner's 2013 Dialogue on Protection Challenges focused on IDPs. It identified a number of practical ways to enhance protection and assistance for this population. UNHCR also renewed its commitment to engaging in situations of internal displacement and to improving its own performance, in support of national efforts and in cooperation with a wide array of stakeholders. UNHCR has since issued internal guidance to staff that outlines the principles and framework for the Office's engagement in situations of internal displacement. In addition, a new e-learning programme was launched to build staff awareness.

42. A number of important normative developments took place over the past year, including the adoption of national policies on IDPs in Afghanistan, Nigeria and Yemen. Georgia initiated steps to revise its law in relation to status recognition for second and third generation IDP children. A national commission was established in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to draft IDP legislation, and UNHCR was invited to participate in it. As of February 2014, 22 States were parties to the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), with five accessions during the reporting period. In September 2013, government officials from 15 African countries received training on the implementation of the Kampala Convention, in Uganda. At the 129th assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the IPU and UNHCR released a *Handbook on International Displacement: Responsibility and Action* to help countries formulate domestic frameworks and legislation to protect IDPs.

43. In the context of the inter-agency response to IDP situations, the global protection cluster provided support to 31 country-level protection clusters and other field coordination mechanisms, 20 of which were led by UNHCR. The global protection cluster continued to serve as a platform for analysing trends, developing tools and guidance, providing field support, building staff capacity and undertaking advocacy. To facilitate access to information across operations, the global protection cluster relied on its operations cell, help desk, periodic newsletters and its website. The global protection cluster worked closely with country-level protection clusters to provide input for strategic plans and inter-agency appeals. Equally important was the global protection cluster's support in undertaking comprehensive needs assessments and setting up protection monitoring that could feed into the design of an overarching protection strategy for the United Nations country teams.

44. UNHCR undertook regular support missions to strengthen the capacity of country-level protection clusters, contributed to field guidance materials, and organized a series of training activities on cluster coordination, protection mainstreaming and protection in natural disasters. In Côte d'Ivoire, support was provided to train military and security forces on the rule of law in the aftermath of an emergency, and to conduct a series of contingency planning workshops with a protection focus.

45. Together with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, UNHCR is implementing a project with funding provided by the European Commission to build the evidence base on displacement arising from natural disasters and climate change, and to equip States with tools and guidance for responding to such situations. UNHCR is also supporting the Nansen Initiative on disaster-induced cross-border displacement, and held a consultation with partners in San Remo, Italy on planned relocations and humanitarian evacuations. UNHCR participates in a UN-wide Advisory Group on Climate Change and Human Mobility, the purpose of which is to develop partnerships among various organizations in order to effectively inform policy and law-making.

V. Solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons

46. Solutions remained elusive for many persons of concern to UNHCR due to ongoing instability in some countries and a lack of sustainable reintegration opportunities in others. Nevertheless, significant steps were taken to advance solutions for refugees and IDPs, including in the context of partnerships. In 2013, more than half a million persons secured a durable solution.

47. To bolster UNHCR's focus on solutions, UNHCR established a Solutions Steering Group at Headquarters. The Group aims to ensure that solutions activities address political, legal, economic and development issues holistically and strategically, and that projects are evidence-based and results-oriented. However, advancing solutions requires a strong commitment from the international community. The Copenhagen Roundtable held in April 2014 helped solidify this commitment with the launching of a Solutions Alliance, a network of actors from governments, humanitarian and development organizations, civil society and the private sector who are committed to finding innovative solutions to displacement. UNHCR is one of the five co-leads of the Alliance, alongside the Danish and Colombian Governments, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Rescue Committee. Thematic areas to be addressed, which can foster solutions, include housing, land and property, personal documentation, and social cohesion.

48. UNHCR is working with partners to articulate comprehensive solutions strategies with multi-year frameworks, as well as clear step-by-step actions to achieve these objectives. Exploring how solutions can feed into the initial emergency planning and response, such as the facilitation of resettlement for Syrian refugees during the current crisis, is also progressing.

49. In Africa, UNHCR and partners are pursuing the implementation of a multi-year plan of action to address the situation of some 430,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo who are living in sub-Saharan Africa; some 50,000 are expected to be resettled by 2017, and options are being explored for the others. In 2013, more than 62,000 Congolese refugees returned to Equateur province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, bringing the total number of returns to more than 110,000 since the beginning of the repatriation operation in May 2012.

50. Further progress has been achieved in the implementation of the comprehensive solutions strategy for former Angolan refugees. In 2013, over 1,700 Angolan refugees repatriated with UNHCR's assistance, mostly from Botswana and Zambia. The local integration of Angolans in countries of asylum advanced as well, with the issuance of residence permits and personal documentation. UNHCR held consultations with the Angolan authorities and host countries to plan the repatriation of the remaining 25,000 Angolans wishing to return home. Information campaigns and counseling are ongoing in the refugee communities. In Zambia, the strategic framework for the local integration of former refugees has been finalized. It foresees alternative legal status and integration opportunities for former refugees in and around the hosting areas. At the same time, the Angolan authorities have started the screening process for the issuance of national passports in the two settlements in Zambia as well as in Namibia. Most countries hosting significant numbers of Angolan refugees have invoked the cessation clause.

51. The Rwandan comprehensive solutions strategy remained in focus over the past year. Some 7,300 former Rwandan refugees from 12 countries took up the option of voluntary repatriation, while the principal solution remained local integration. Naturalization commitments were made by a number of countries, and it is hoped that more will join in this effort. To determine the intentions of the population, surveys were underway in all of the host countries. The key obstacle to local integration, however, is the inability of many refugees to pay for Rwandan passports and local residency permits. UNHCR continues to advocate for a waiver of the fees. Exemption procedures in respect of cessation declarations are in place in most countries.

52. UNHCR signed a tripartite agreement with Somalia and Kenya, establishing a framework that underlines the shared principle of voluntary return. While relative stability in some parts of Somalia has triggered the spontaneous return of some IDPs and refugees, the conditions are not yet in place for organized voluntary returns. The Tanzanian Government completed the screening process for the naturalization of some 1,300 Somali Bantu refugees living in Chogo settlement. The certificates are being processed by the authorities.

53. In West Africa, UNHCR is working to bring to a close a number of protracted refugee situations, including Ghanaians in Togo; Chadians in Niger; and Togolese in Benin and Ghana. In Benin, the Government has extended the offer of 10-year residence permits to all refugees on its territory. In Mali, humanitarian and development partners are collaborating with the Government and local communities on a return strategy for IDPs and refugees. While the situation in northern Mali is not yet conducive to large-scale returns, assistance is being provided to refugees in Niger and Mauritania who wish to return to certain locations. In Côte d'Ivoire, a pilot country for the Secretary-General's Policy Committee Decision on Durable Solutions, UNHCR and UNDP are working with the Government, the United Nations Country Team, NGOs and civil society, on the

development of a solutions strategy for IDPs and returnees. Joint projects on social cohesion are underway, and a profiling exercise starting in June 2014 will complement the recently completed national census and inform programme priorities.

54. In the Americas, a comprehensive solutions initiative was developed in Ecuador, in coordination with the Government, to improve livelihood opportunities for refugees, while pursuing resettlement possibilities and advancing the prospect of labour mobility and migratory solutions within the region. Voluntary repatriation continues to be pursued in Colombia in line with the evolving situation. In Costa Rica, most Colombian refugees are now advancing towards naturalization and are less dependent on aid. The Agreement Relating to Residence Permits for Nationals of States parties to Mercosur facilitates protection for Colombian refugees who are settled in other South American countries and their migration to Argentina or Brazil. In Colombia, the transitional solutions initiative, a joint project between UNHCR and UNDP, continues to yield progress through initiatives undertaken in 17 IDP communities.

55. In Europe, UNHCR completed an EU-funded project to improve refugee integration in European Union Member States, which was carried out in four Central European countries. The project examined factors that both hinder and assist refugee integration, as well as the policies necessary for integration to be successful. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a three-year EU-funded project led by UNHCR is aimed at implementing the Revised Strategy for the implementation of Annex VII of the Dayton Peace Agreement and supporting solutions for IDPs through a joint needs-based prioritization of communities and families with specific needs. As part of the durable solutions strategy, UNHCR has recommended that host States apply by the end of 2014 the "ceased circumstances" cessation clause for the refugee population displaced from Croatia during the 1991-1995 conflict. However, this could be progressively implemented between 2014 and 2017 to allow fulfilment of the commitments made by governments in the 2005 Sarajevo Declaration and the 2011 Joint Declaration."

56. In Asia, UNHCR continues to work with concerned governments and partners to implement the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries. A portfolio of project proposals to address the needs of Afghan refugees and host communities has been developed to advance solutions on a regional basis. In the host countries, refugee skills development is being emphasized in order to support solutions for Afghans, including by equipping refugees with skills and work experience needed in their potential areas of return. In an effort to regularize the 1.4 million undocumented Afghans in the country, the Iranian Government held bilateral negotiations with the Afghan authorities and, subsequently, offered renewable residence visas to all Afghans holding legal travel documents in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which would allow them to obtain work permits. Accordingly, around 135,000 families have been issued with passports by the Afghan Consulate in the country.

57. In Kyrgyzstan, UNHCR is working with the Government and partner agencies to ensure the sustainable reintegration of those displaced by ethnic violence in 2010. Programmes in community development, coexistence, livelihoods and protection are being implemented under the umbrella of the Secretary-General's Durable Solutions Initiative for Displaced People, with support from the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. UNHCR's contribution to these collaborative efforts includes community reconciliation initiatives and legal assistance to facilitate access to services and justice.

VI. Protection, prevention and solutions in relation to statelessness

58. UNHCR has continued to expand its statelessness activities and forge new partnerships, encouraging an enlargement in the pool of actors working to address the issue. Heightened international awareness of the problem, as well as greater resolve by States and other stakeholders to prevent and eradicate situations of statelessness, have also led to significant results. These advancements stem largely from the international and organization-wide focus on statelessness since the 2011 ministerial intergovernmental event, which commemorated the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

59. Accessions to both the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention continued to grow. Côte d'Ivoire, Jamaica, Lithuania, Montenegro, Nicaragua, Peru and Ukraine acceded to one or both of the statelessness conventions. This brought the number of States parties to the 1954 Convention to 80 and to the 1961 Convention to 55. Thirty-two per cent of the pledges on accession made by States at the ministerial intergovernmental event have now been completed.

60. Determining the number, profile and situation of stateless people remains a challenge. Based on improved baseline statistical data, UNHCR revised its estimate of the number of stateless people globally to at least ten million. Mapping initiatives and studies to more accurately determine the number of stateless individuals and better understand the hardships they face were conducted in the Baltic and Nordic countries.

61. Determining the status of stateless persons is vital to ensuring that they receive the protection that flows from such recognition. UNHCR worked closely with the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to establish a statelessness determination procedure. Turkey adopted a law on foreigners and international protection, which establishes a framework for the protection and identification of stateless persons. UNHCR will continue to advocate for the adoption of statelessness determination procedures in countries challenged by the identification and treatment of stateless people in the migration context. This includes the nine remaining countries which pledged to adopt such procedures at the 2011 ministerial intergovernmental event. To encourage such efforts among these and other States, a new brochure on statelessness determination procedures was developed.

62. UNHCR provided advice on the reform of nationality laws to prevent and reduce statelessness in 67 countries. To further develop international legal guidance on the issue of loss and deprivation of nationality, which can lead to statelessness, UNHCR convened an expert meeting to discuss and reach conclusions on the interpretation of Articles 5-10 of the 1961 Convention.

63. Building on last year's Executive Committee Conclusion No. 111(LXIV) on civil registration (see A/AC.96/1132, para. 13), efforts to achieve universal birth registration as a means of preventing statelessness among children are being reinforced through a number of activities in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. In Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, birth registration of Syrian refugee children born in those countries was promoted though country-specific advocacy materials distributed to the refugees and the local authorities. In the Asia-Pacific region, UNHCR collaborated with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and Plan International, to provide input on birth registration and the prevention of statelessness for the Regional Strategic Plan for the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics.

64. One critical breakthrough in the effort to prevent statelessness has been in relation to the reform of nationality laws that discriminate against women, preventing mothers from conferring nationality on their children and leading to statelessness. In 2013, Senegal reformed its nationality law. The Bahamas Constitutional Commission agreed with UNHCR's recommendation to recast in gender neutral language certain articles of the Constitution relating to acquisition of nationality by children. Momentum on this issue has led to the formation of a new coalition of experts from civil society and academia, with the support of UNHCR and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). The coalition will work to raise awareness about nationality laws that discriminate against women and aim to achieve a significant reduction in the number of countries that retain gender-discriminatory nationality laws.

65. Another positive development was the reform by Côte d'Ivoire of its nationality law, which stands to benefit hundreds of thousands of stateless people. This measure will facilitate the acquisition of nationality by people who were born and resident in the country for decades and will also contribute to reconciliation and social cohesion. Technical advice and training in Côte d'Ivoire have already resulted in the confirmation of nationality for thousands of stateless people. Through the provision of legal support, UNHCR has been able to assist over 14,000 individuals to acquire or confirm their nationality in Kyrgyzstan. It has also assisted stateless people in Iraq to apply for nationality and those in South Sudan to confirm it.

66. UNHCR was concerned by a Constitutional Court ruling in the Dominican Republic that arbitrarily deprives tens of thousands of Dominicans, the majority of Haitian descent, of their nationality and renders them stateless. In response, UNHCR, together with the United Nations Country Team, offered to assist the Government in taking steps to restore the nationality of individuals affected by the ruling. Elsewhere around the world, UNHCR continued to advocate for the resolution of large protracted statelessness situations.

67. In 2013, UNHCR laid the groundwork for its campaign to eradicate statelessness over the next ten years, concentrating specifically on partnerships, awareness-raising and capacity building. Following up on the High Commissioner's 2012 Dialogue on Protection Challenges: Faith and Protection, UNHCR participated in a consultation on the human rights of stateless persons organized by the World Council of Churches (WCC). This led to the WCC Assembly establishing statelessness as a global priority issue for the next eight years. Building on its existing partnership with the IPU, UNHCR delivered a workshop benefiting over 60 parliamentarians on gender discrimination in nationality laws and statelessness. In West Africa, following a roundtable co-organized with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union in September 2013, the Banjul Appeal was issued. This regional declaration calls upon States, NGOs, and regional and international organizations to take specific measures to prevent and reduce statelessness. UNHCR worked with the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) to convene the first regional conference on statelessness in six GCC Member States. In 2014, UNHCR is using the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the 1954 Convention to help generate momentum for the campaign to eradicate statelessness.

VII. Conclusion

68. The multitude, scale and rapid escalation of the emergencies in recent years has made the delivery of protection and humanitarian assistance, as well as the identification of solutions, increasingly complex. The year was again dominated by protracted situations and new emergencies, causing large-scale displacement both internally and across borders. Insecure and inaccessible locations challenged the delivery of aid and the provision of protection, putting the lives and safety of United Nations personnel and partners at risk.

UNHCR is striving to respond robustly and innovatively to the diverse legal, operational, resource and security challenges brought on by a myriad of complex situations. UNHCR calls upon the international community to share burdens and responsibilities and to redouble its efforts to find solutions to the many displacement and statelessness situations around the globe.

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Consideration of reports on the work of the Standing Committee
Programme budgets, management, financial control
and administrative oversight

Accounts for the year 2013 as contained in the Report of the Board of Auditors to the General Assembly on the accounts of the voluntary funds administered by the UNHCR for the period ended December 2013

Note by the High Commissioner

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Please recycle

1. The *Financial rules for voluntary funds administered by the High Commissioner for Refugees* require that: "The High Commissioner shall submit annual financial statements certified by the Controller and approved by himself/herself to:

(a) the United Nations Board of Auditors within three months after the close of each financial year; and

(b) the Executive Committee at its next session. He/she shall also submit to the Executive Committee the audit certificate, the report of the Board of Auditors and the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions thereon."[1]

2. The United Nations Board of Auditors has audited the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2013. The full text of the Board's report, including the audited financial statements and the audit opinion, will be issued in due course for consideration by the General Assembly (Fifth Committee) under the symbol A/69/5/Add.6. The High Commissioner's response to the audit recommendations will be issued in due course as an addendum to this document (A/AC/.96/1135/Add.1).

3. The Executive Committee is invited to consult document A/69/5/Add.6.[2]

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[1] A/AC.96/503/Rev.10, Art.11.3.

[2] To be posted, once available, on the Official Document System (ODS) of the United Nations and on the Executive Committee page of UNHCR's website.

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Note by the High Commissioner

Corrigendum

The title of the document A/AC.96/1135 should read as above.

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Addendum

Key issues and measures taken in response to the Report of the Board of Auditors for 2013

Report by the High Commissioner

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I. Introduction

1. This report provides an overview of the key findings of the United Nations Board of Auditors in its audit of the financial statements of the voluntary funds administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the year ended 31 December 2013[1], as well as measures taken or proposed by the Office in response to the main and other recommendations.

2. UNHCR prepared the financial statements for the period ended 31 December 2013 in accordance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS). Following its examination, the Board of Auditors concluded that the financial statements presented fairly UNHCR's financial position, and its financial performance and cash flows for the year ended 31 December 2013, in all material respects and in accordance with IPSAS. As part of its 2013 examination, the Board undertook field visits to UNHCR operations in Ethiopia, South Sudan and Turkey, and examined UNHCR's response to the Syrian Arab Republic situation in Jordan.

3. The audit was conducted primarily to enable the Board to form an opinion on UNHCR's financial statements and included a review of financial systems and internal controls, as well as a test examination of the accounting records. The Board also focused, as part of its 2013 review of the efficiency of UNHCR's administration and management of operations, on: (i) key aspects of the Syrian Arab Republic situation, particularly the refugee operation in Jordan; (ii) the sectoral programme for the delivery of health services; and (iii) the management of implementing partners.

4. For the audit of the 2013 financial statements, the Board reported key findings and 18 new recommendations in the following six areas: (i) financial matters; (ii) internal audit arrangements; (iii) the Syrian Arab Republic situation; (iv) the provision of health services; (v) implementing partners; and (vi) counter-fraud measures. This document lists the Board's key findings and main recommendations for these areas, and outlines how UNHCR plans to address the identified risks.

5. The Board noted that UNHCR fully implemented 43 of its recommendations from 2012 and previous years, and is in the process of addressing some 22 outstanding recommendations. The Board also recognized that many of its previous recommendations require structural or far-reaching action and, therefore, making progress in some areas will take time. Some examples of these areas include the implementation of an organization-wide approach to risk management, the development of an enhanced framework for implementation with partners, and improved management of procurement. An update on the implementation status and follow-up actions for outstanding recommendations from previous years is available on UNHCR's website at www.unhcr.org/excom, under *Standing Committee documentation*.

II. Key findings relating to the 2013 financial statements

A. Financial matters

6. The Board noted that UNHCR has used IPSAS-based financial information to significantly improve its overall inventory holding management and the financial management of country offices. However, the Board believed that there is still room for

[1] A/69/5/Add.6, Voluntary funds administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2013 and Report of the Board of Auditors, as referenced in A/AC.96/1135.

further improvements and recommended the introduction of target levels for inventory holdings and other assets. In response, UNHCR confirmed that measures have been taken to determine the minimum inventory levels to meet the needs of 600,000 persons of concern. Target levels have also been established for all stockpiles managed by the field offices and are reviewed regularly, at minimum semiannually. To refine the adequacy of target levels, UNHCR is in the process of introducing a supply planning method, by which the inventory levels and the quantities to be purchased are determined based on expected future needs, thus optimizing the stock levels.

7. The Board reviewed the methodology, which has been in place for four years, for capturing and allocating the costs to one of the three cost categories used by UNHCR (i.e. programme, programme support and management and administrative), and recognized that this methodology has provided a consistent basis for tracking costs. The Board noted, however, that further refinement could be achieved in the methodology, for example relating to the classification of staff costs under each category. In this regard, UNHCR has indicated that it will undertake a full review of the existing methodology with the aim to further refine the accuracy of the cost classification and reporting.

Key issues/risks identified: effective and efficient management of inventory, achieving optimum levels of inventory holdings; accuracy and transparency of allocating and reporting programme, programme support and management and administrative costs incurred by UNHCR.

B. Internal audit arrangements

8. The Board has reviewed progress in introducing revised internal audit arrangements and found that discussions between the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and UNHCR have been ongoing for over two years. The Board re-iterated the importance of having a strong internal audit function, which is critical for the internal control system of the organization, and urged UNHCR and OIOS to reach an agreement on future internal audit arrangements as a matter of priority. In this regard, UNHCR has confirmed that discussions with OIOS are being held to finalize an agreement.

C. Syrian Arab Republic situation

9. The Board focused its examination of the Syrian Arab Republic situation on UNHCR's response in Jordan to the emergency, where approximately 25 per cent of refugees leaving Syria were hosted. The Board found that UNHCR had responded well overall in Jordan to the demands of the emergency, and emphasized that UNHCR successfully mobilized resources to meet the material needs of the persons of concern and had made good progress moving from an emergency footing towards a more sustainable refugee operation.

10. The Board reviewed the introduction of the biometric recognition system used in Jordan for refugee registration. It acknowledged that the system greatly improved controls preventing multiple registrations and provided more robust information to track the complex refugee movements within Jordan. The Board recommended that UNHCR performs an evaluation of this system with a view to use knowledge collected so far and apply it to a standard global system for biometric identification and registration of refugees. UNHCR has committed to ensuring that lessons learned from the implementation of registration procedures within the Jordan operation – as applicable – are taken into account in the development of global biometrics registration procedures.

11. The Board also reviewed UNHCR's cash assistance programme in Jordan and noted that, compared to the supply of commodities, it provides quicker and cheaper delivery of assistance, as well as an increased independence and choice for recipients. The Board found that UNHCR has gathered extensive data on its cash programme, but recommended that the scheme be independently evaluated. To address this recommendation, UNHCR will carry out a study, by the end of 2014, on the impact of cash assistance on reducing negative coping mechanisms among Syrian refugees in four countries in the region. UNHCR has also commissioned an independent evaluation of the overall response to the Syrian refugee situation in Jordan and Lebanon, which is also expected to be completed by the end of the year. UNHCR will use the results of these studies and evaluations to conceptualize, if necessary, a comprehensive evaluation to be performed in 2015. The comprehensive evaluation would address areas that may have been overlooked by the previous studies, while avoiding duplication and ensuring a cost-effective approach.

12. Furthermore, while recognizing that optimal solutions may be compromised in emergency situations, the Board noted that the receipt of donor funding late in the year could lead to short-term programming of activities where it is easy to spend funds quickly rather than using them optimally. The Board understood that this may be partly due to the lack of multi-year funding agreements and the predominance of annual agreements with implementing partners. The Board recommended that UNHCR explore if greater use could be made of partner agreements extending beyond the traditional 12 months. UNHCR explained that such flexibility could be further enhanced if donors subscribe to a reliable and firm commitment for multiple-year funding to allow planning, implementation and conclusion of agreements beyond 12 months. Currently, UNHCR is faced with the following constraints in extending partnership agreements beyond 12 months: (i) the donor contributions are normally pledged for a year; (ii) UNHCR's organizational budget is approved on annual basis; and (iii) the Office needs to maintain flexibility in order to respond to existing and newly arising emergency situations. Notwithstanding the above, UNHCR will further assess whether this recommendation could be implemented.

13. The Board noted that the fast-track recruitment procedures did not work well in the early stages of the operation, as UNHCR took up to six months on average to recruit the early batches of fast-track recruits. While this subsequently reduced to less than three months, the Board highlighted the need for UNHCR to consider more flexible staff recruitment procedures in addition to following established internal monitoring and recruitment tracking procedures. UNHCR informed the Board that significant improvements have already been made in the policy and procedures for fast-track recruitment. As a result, the recruitment time has considerably shortened.

Key issues/risks identified: efficiency of registration systems; mobilization of timely resources in order to conclude longer-term agreements with the implementing partners; flexibility of staff recruitment in emergency situations; adequacy of cash programmes in the Syrian Arab Republic situation.

D. Provision of health services

14. The Board noted that consistently high levels of health service provision were evident in terms of treatment, clinical staffing and availability of medical supplies in most locations it visited. However, the Board identified a number of areas where further enhancements could be made, including better links at the camp level between health outcomes and health spending, and more opportunities for the interpretation of the statistical data. In response to this recommendation, UNHCR has committed to develop guidance for country teams on cost effectiveness criteria, using published international data and best practices in health services.

15. Equally, the Board highlighted that there is scope for UNHCR to focus its strategy, reporting and resources on the main burdens of disease in each operation. The Board emphasized that the strategies and reporting at country offices tend to focus predominantly on standard global strategic priorities such as HIV/AIDS rather than on the main causes of mortality, morbidity and patient demand. The Board recommended that UNHCR requires its country offices to explicitly refer to the main burdens of disease when bidding for health programme resources. In response, UNHCR will take measures to ensure that planning instructions will reflect the Board's recommendation and will include guidance for selection of health partners.

Key issues/risks identified: accuracy and reliability of data obtained through the health information systems; meaningful links at camp level between health outcomes and health spending; link between number of health workers and size of refugee population

E. Implementing partners

16. The Board took note of the fact that UNHCR is developing and implementing a risk-based approach to managing partnerships, which requires closer monitoring and control of higher-risk partners. This new approach will be fully implemented by 2015. The Board reviewed the controls exercised by UNHCR over partners in respect to financial performance and performance against objectives. Such controls, carried out through monitoring, verification visits or independent external audits, must provide UNHCR with high assurance with respect to the work of its partners. However, the Board found that, while these controls were operating effectively in Jordan, there were evident weaknesses in the planning and performance of 2013 verification work in Ethiopia, South Sudan and elsewhere. The Board will therefore continue in future years to examine the effectiveness of the new risk-based approach.

17. The Board noted that due diligence procedures exercised by UNHCR were based on the partner's own declarations of eligibility and were not as rigorous as, for example, vendor registration procedures. It recommended, therefore, enhancing the due diligence procedures for the initial vetting of partners. UNHCR informed the Board that a web-based "Partner Portal" is currently under development, which will provide an interactive platform for partnership registration. This tool will also allow for more comprehensive and systematic checking and updating of the enlisted partner profiles.

18. The Board also recommended putting in place a mechanism to share intelligence on poor quality or unacceptable partners with other entities, such as United Nations agencies, donors, or development banks. UNHCR has confirmed that it will explore avenues for networking and exchanging information with other United Nations organizations.

Key issues/risks identified: selection, maintenance and monitoring performance of partners

F. Counter-fraud measures

19. In response to a previous Board recommendation to review and update current anti-fraud policies and procedures, UNHCR issued a revised Strategic Framework for the Prevention of Fraud and Corruption in July 2013, to serve as a transparent reference for awareness, advocacy and implementation of measures to prevent and report fraud. In line with the framework, UNHCR has put in place mechanisms for reporting possible fraud and for instituting disciplinary measures or contractual remedies once the fraud has been investigated. However, UNHCR still has to streamline its processes to integrate the fraud prevention measures, in order to achieve a full implementation of the framework. In this

regard, since 2013, financial management training for country representatives has included a chapter on fraud prevention and mitigation. Furthermore, new software (Governance Risk Compliance - GRC) to enhance the automated internal controls will be installed as part of the upgrade of UNHCR's enterprise resource planning system. The Board has called for more concerted action by senior management to achieve meaningful results and full implementation of the Board's previous recommendation. To address this, UNHCR is establishing a comprehensive implementation plan for the requirements and measures related to fraud prevention and mitigation in the framework.

Key issue/risk identified: fraud risk

III. Main recommendations

A. Recommendation (paragraph 9)

20. While recognizing UNHCR's position and its dependence on voluntary funding, the Board recommends UNHCR establish appropriate target levels for inventory holdings and other assets.

Measures taken by the Administration

21. For its seven centrally-managed global stockpiles, UNHCR has determined the minimum inventory levels to meet the needs of 600,000 persons of concern. At the end of 2013, this was valued at approximately $34 million based on average prices. Target levels have also been established for all stockpiles managed by the field. All target levels are reviewed regularly, at minimum semi-annually. To refine the adequacy of target levels, UNHCR is in the process of introducing a supply planning method, by which the level of inventories and the quantities to be purchased are determined based on expected future needs, thus optimizing the stock levels.

B. Recommendation (paragraph 18)

22. The Board recommends that UNHCR review and further refine the methodology for allocating programme and management costs, which has been in place for four years, with a view to increasing the granularity of its knowledge and ensuring that the costs are accurately captured and reported.

Measures taken by the Administration

23. UNHCR allocates its costs across three categories: programme (PG) costs, programme support (PS) costs, and management and administration (MA) costs. The existing methodology has been developed by UNHCR and applied consistently in all programmes, projects and locations for the last four years. The Board noted that some further refinement could be achieved in the methodology, for example relating to the classification of staff costs under each of the three above-mentioned categories. In this regard, UNHCR will undertake a full review of the existing methodology with the aim to further refine the accuracy of the cost classification and reporting.

C. Recommendation (paragraph 30)

24. The Board recommends UNHCR evaluate the performance of the biometric registration procedures implemented in Jordan with a view to concluding its work to provide a standard global system for the biometric identification and registration of

refugees.

Measures taken by the Administration

25. UNHCR's development team for the global biometrics system, in coordination with the country office, will ensure that lessons learned from the implementation of registration procedures within the Jordan operation – as applicable – are fully taken into account in the development of global biometrics registration procedures.

D. Recommendation (paragraph 36)

26. The Board recommends that UNHCR explore whether greater use could be made of partner agreements extending beyond 12 months.

Measures taken by the Administration

27. Flexibility is already exercised to allow extension of the implementation and agreement period of partner agreements, depending on availability of funds and operational requirements. In response to the emergency operations in Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic, 200 projects were extended beyond 2013. This flexibility can be further enhanced if donors would subscribe to a reliable and firm commitment for multiple-year funding to allow planning, implementation and conclusion of agreements beyond 12 months. However, currently UNHCR is faced with the following constraints in extending partnership agreements beyond 12 months: (i) the donor contributions are normally pledged for a year; (ii) UNHCR's organizational budget is approved on annual basis; and (iii) the Office needs to maintain flexibility in order to respond to existing and newly arising emergency situations. Signing multi-year agreements with partners poses greater risks for partners and UNHCR, without having funding secured. Notwithstanding the above, UNHCR will further assess whether this recommendation could be implemented.

E. Recommendation (paragraph 40)

28. The Board recommends that UNHCR adopt more widely a flexible approach to emergency staffing, including the contracting of staff from other organizations and, when facing bottlenecks, outsourcing some or all recruitment processes.

Measures taken by the Administration

29. UNHCR has already put in place a more flexible approach to emergency staffing. Several revisions of the fast-track procedures have considerably improved the speed of filling of vacancies – from up to six months initially to less than three months in more recent batches. Effective 15 July 2014, UNHCR promulgated a policy under which the filling of fast-track positions with internal applicants who have been jointly approved for these positions by managers and the Division of Human Resources Management no longer requires review by the Joint Review Board. The most recent fast-track recruitment announced on 17 July 2014 for the Central African Republic and the South Sudan emergency situations is subject to these revised policy and procedures. Therefore, UNHCR considers this recommendation implemented.

F. Recommendation (paragraph 56)

30. The Board recommends that, given the major scale of UNHCR's Jordan cash programme and plans to expand it to other countries, UNHCR commission an independent and expert evaluation of the programme, with the aim of reporting before the end of 2014.

Measures taken by the Administration

31. Currently, UNHCR is commissioning a study on the impact of cash assistance on reducing negative coping mechanisms among Syrian refugees in four countries in the region, to be concluded by the end of the year 2014. It has also contracted an independent evaluation of the overall response to the Syrian refugee situation in Jordan and Lebanon, which is also expected by the end of the year. There are a number of evaluations and studies taking place in Jordan in 2014, commissioned by other actors (international organizations or NGOs) in the field of humanitarian response, on cash assistance programmes and their impact. UNHCR will use the results of these studies and evaluations to conceptualize, if necessary, a comprehensive evaluation to be performed in 2015. The comprehensive evaluation would address areas that may have been overlooked by the previous studies, while avoiding duplication and ensuring a cost-effective approach.

G. Recommendation (paragraph 76)

32. The Board recommends that UNHCR revise its planning guidance to (a) require country offices to explicitly refer to the main burdens of disease when bidding for health programme resources; and (b) reminds country offices of their discretion to use non-global priority indicators to monitor country-specific health issues.

Measures taken by the Administration

33. UNHCR will ensure that planning instructions reflect the recommendation of the Board of Auditors, and will also include guidance for the selection of health partners.

H. Recommendation (paragraph 93)

34. The Board recommends that UNHCR works towards more consistent utilization levels per health worker across its camps, through an appropriate mix of:

(a) Considering the selective redeployment of some health worker posts between smaller and larger camps, as appropriate, and beyond health management;

(b) Directing new intakes of refugees to existing underutilized camps;

(c) Camp consolidation, working with national authorities to close smaller camps that would not be economical to sustain in the long term.

Measures taken by the Administration

35. UNHCR issued a policy on alternatives to camps in July 2014. Through this policy, UNHCR is making an institutional commitment to pursue alternatives to camp situations, whenever possible, while ensuring that refugees are protected and assisted effectively and are able to achieve solutions. The policy refocuses attention on refugees living in camps and extends the principal objectives of UNHCR's urban refugee policy to all operational contexts. UNHCR has also developed several guidance documents that are in line with the recommendations provided by the Board, including (i) a global strategy for public health 2014-2018; (ii) guidance on health in urban areas; and (iii) operational guidance on health insurance schemes for refugees. UNHCR considers this recommendation therefore as implemented.

I. Recommendation (paragraph 105)

36. To strengthen the selection process of implementing partners, the Board recommends that UNHCR:

(a) Enhance its due diligence procedures for the initial vetting of partners to include reference checks where appropriate; and

(b) Develop mechanisms, in consultation with other United Nations agencies and the wider humanitarian community, to share intelligence on implementing partners.

Measures taken by the Administration

37. The self-declaration of eligibility by partners is an initial step of partner introduction to UNHCR, as part of a comprehensive process of registration and vetting. A new web-based tool, known as the "Partner Portal", is under development. It will provide a platform for partnership registration, including an extensive questionnaire. The Partner Portal will serve as a database of screened partner profiles, including type of partner, references of previous relations with UNHCR and other United Nations organizations, performance tracking and agreements. It will allow a systematic manner of maintaining, reviewing and updating profiles, screening, enlisting and removing entities. The Partner Portal will also facilitate information-sharing among UNHCR, country offices and other relevant parties.

38. In respect of the recommendation to share intelligence on implementing partners, UNHCR will explore avenues and mechanisms for networking and exchanging information with other UN system organizations.

IV. Other recommendations

A. Recommendation (paragraph 45)

39. The Board recommends UNHCR to evaluate the associated costs and benefits of basing the Regional Bureau for the Middle East in Amman and to identify whether any lessons can be learned for existing or future operations.

Measures taken by the Administration

40. UNHCR agrees that it is important to conduct an internal review of costs and benefits of basing the Regional Refugee Coordination/Director of the Regional Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa in Amman to improve the existing management and governance structure, if needed. The review will also aim to draw lessons for designing future structures and systems for managing large-scale and rapidly evolving emergencies.

B. Recommendation (paragraph 50)

41. In view of the success of the real-time tool ActivityInfo, used in Jordan to coordinate the activities of UNHCR and partners, the Board recommends that UNHCR explore the scope for wider use of online geographical information systems such as ActivityInfo.

Measures taken by the Administration

42. UNHCR will undertake a review of the use of ActivityInfo to assess the feasibility of expanding its use and/or incorporating key functions into other global systems.

C. Recommendation (paragraph 61)

43. The Board recommends, in order to avoid overstocking and preserve flexibility, UNHCR regularly review stocks held in global and local warehouses to confirm that stock levels remain appropriate.

Measures taken by the Administration

44. UNHCR agrees that it is important to regularly review stocks held in global and local warehouses, a principle which is built into the current procedures. The Supply Management and Logistics Service (SMLS) reviews stock levels in all warehouses on a monthly basis, and reports on the items that potentially exceed the requirements (i.e. stock in excess of the last 12 months' distribution or in excess of the average distribution during the last three years). The report is sent to the countries concerned for review and action, if required. Stock levels for emergency operations are planned based on the number of persons of concerns expected, which is difficult to predict in volatile environments. For example, at the time of review, UNHCR temporarily held more stock of certain items than required in Lebanon, because a higher influx of refugees had been expected. Meanwhile, a significant part of the surplus stock has been redirected from Lebanon to Iraq where it was needed, and a similar solution is being sought for the remaining surplus stocks. UNHCR expects that there will not be any material surplus stocks in inventory by the end of 2014.

D. Recommendation (paragraph 80)

45. The Board recommends that UNHCR deepens its annual fact sheet summaries for public health, reproductive health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), to identify the relationship between health indicators and health resources consumed, twice yearly and at camp level.

Measures taken by the Administration

46. UNHCR will support the development of half-yearly country summaries on public health, reproductive health and WASH to be used during the mid-term review of budgetary resource allocation at the country level. UNHCR will continue to produce annual country public health fact sheets based on data gathered from Twine (an online platform to manage and analyze public health data collected in refugee operations), including an analysis of past and current operational data to identify trends in health-related programme costs. During regional workshops, a programme training component will be added to train public health officers on the use of health data in the results framework against budgets.

E. Recommendation (paragraph 83)

47. To understand the experiences of refugees who are not using UNHCR health facilities and devise appropriate interventions, the Board recommends UNHCR to evaluate the performance of the surveillance tool pilot schemes in Kuala Lumpur and Lebanon and to consider the wider application across its network, if applicable.

Measures taken by the Administration

48. UNHCR is currently rolling out a household health assessment and utilization survey in Jordan and Lebanon. Based on this, a decision will be made in November 2014 on tools that will be implemented for monitoring access to health care in non-camp settings.

F. Recommendation (paragraph 86)

49. The Board recommends that UNHCR issues central guidance to country teams on cost-effectiveness criteria in health services as an aid to decision-making and resource allocation in health programmes.

Measures taken by the Administration

50. UNHCR will develop guidance for country teams on cost-effectiveness criteria as recommended by the Board, using published international data and best practices.

G. Recommendation (paragraph 91)

51. The Board recommends that UNHCR refines its standard operating policies for referrals, requiring country offices to:

(a) Include referral numbers and costs to both secondary and tertiary level care in the monthly reporting framework for implementing partners;

(b) Monitor variation in local referral rates and investigate where there are adverse trends or anomalous results;

(c) Require partners to seek approval from UNHCR for cases over a certain monetary threshold; and

(d) Use referral committees to provide consistent and transparent decisions on which high-value cases should be supported.

Measures taken by the Administration

52. UNHCR is currently piloting an automated tool to improve the monitoring of referral care in Ethiopia, Jordan, Lebanon and South Sudan. The results of the pilot will be available by the end of 2014, and a new database referral tool will be subsequently developed. UNHCR will support countries with referral care covered by the organization to have a country-specific standard operating procedure (SOP) in line with the global principles and guidance on referral care.

H. Recommendation (paragraph 98)

53. The Board recommends that UNHCR considers the wider application of its health scorecard system across the country network. It should ensure that, for each health centre where it uses the balanced scorecard, it develops an action plan, jointly with the implementing partner, to address areas of improvement, and that it follows up at regular intervals to ensure progress is being made. UNHCR should report against the balanced scorecard results in the bi-annual performance reporting and use the results when selecting which health implementing partners to work with.

Measures taken by the Administration

54. UNHCR is currently expanding the balanced scorecard (BSC) to include an additional module on reproductive health and HIV. Based on its utilization, a roadmap will be developed for further roll-out of the expanded BSC tool in the online platform Twine and for an improved sharing and reporting mechanism at country, regional and global level. This will allow for consistent follow-up on the utilization of the tool. Through the automated sharing/reporting mechanism, the tool will feed into the mid-term and year-end

evaluation. At the country level, the BSC can be used by programme staff and management to monitor programme implementation and performance and by partners as a performance monitoring tool, and can also inform the partner selection committee.

I. Recommendation (paragraph 101)

55. The Board recommends that UNHCR issues renewed guidance to clarify the circumstances in which implementing partner agreements are unsuitable and commercial procurement may be more appropriate.

Measures taken by the Administration

56. UNHCR will develop and issue guidance clarifying the criteria and circumstances under which activities should be implemented through either non-profit partner organizations or directly through commercial providers. Factors like the purpose of the activity to be implemented and the specific operational requirements, particularly during emergency operations, will be among the critical ones to be considered. Furthermore, a revised procedure on procurement by partners with UNHCR funds is in preparation and will be issued shortly.

V. Conclusion

57. UNHCR reiterates its commitment to address the recommendations made by the Board and to continue to improve procedures, systems and controls in order to mitigate the identified risks. The Board's findings and recommendations that have been accepted by UNHCR will help the organization to prioritize its resources in areas in which it is most exposed to risk.